



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Wednesday, July 16, 2008, 7:00 PM**

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Center, Superior, WI
Meeting Chair	Andy Peterson, MN Co-Chair
Note Taker	Rondi Watson

Members Present	Ed Anderson	City of Superior
	Steve Baker	Douglas County
	Warren Bender	City of Superior
	David Brenna	City of Proctor
	Mike Coyle	Douglas County
	Earl Elde	St. Louis County Townships
	Jay Fosle	City of Duluth
	Melanie Hendrickson	DTA Board
	Keith MacDonald	City of Hermantown
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County
	Cindy Moe	St. Louis County Townships
	Dan Olson	City of Superior
	Andy Peterson	City of Duluth Citizen Rep
Members Absent	Nick Baker*	Douglas County
	Broc Allen	Douglas County Suburban Townships
	Garry Krause*	City of Duluth
	Kevin Norbie*	City of Superior Citizen Rep
	Steve O'Neil*	St. Louis County
Others Present	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Bobbi Retzlaff	WisDOT - Madison
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Secretary
	* Excused	

**1. Introductions and Agenda Review**

In MIC Co-Chair Nick Baker's absence, MN Co-Chair Andy Peterson called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ron Chicka welcomed new DTA Board representative Melanie Hendrickson, who is replacing Tari Rayala after her term on the DTA Board expired.

Ron also introduced Bobbi Retzlaff from the WisDOT central office and thanked her for attending tonight's meeting. She made the trip to Superior to participate in the MIC's mid-year review, the annual meeting with Mn DOT, WisDOT, FHWA and transit representatives which took place earlier in the day to discuss the MIC's work plan, budget, and progress.

No changes to the agenda were put forward.

## **2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of June 18, 2008**

Chair Baker called for amendments or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

**Motion and Discussion** Earl Elde/Warren Bender moved to approve the meeting summary from the June 18, 2008 meeting with no changes. No discussion, motion approved by unanimous vote.

### **Committee Business--Announcements**

#### **August and September Meetings Rescheduled for September 3, 2008**

Ron Chicka announced that the MIC meetings on August 20 and September 17<sup>th</sup> were being cancelled due to staff unavailability both months, and rescheduled for a single meeting on Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>. This will be the annual joint MIC and TAC meeting, held at the Proctor Community Center at 7:00 pm, preceded by a catered picnic supper at 5:30 pm.

#### **MN MPO Summer Workshop – Invitation to Attend 8/12/08 Open Session**

Ron announced that the MIC is hosting the annual Minnesota MPO Summer Workshop for Directors and Planners, an annual three-day forum for MPO and MnDOT planning staff from across the state. This year, MIC Board and TAC members are invited to attend the sessions on Tuesday, August 12 at no charge. The topic for the morning session is Community Sustainability, featuring a keynote address by Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, who will speak to the importance as well as the process of regional planning and investment for transit. Congressman Jim Oberstar has been invited to participate as part of the afternoon session covering the upcoming federal transportation bill. He added that Rondi Watson would be contacting MIC and TAC members by email with registration information.

#### **NADO Research Foundation Report on the Arrowhead Region**

Ron distributed copies of the recent report by the National Association of Development Organization, entitled "Arrowhead Region: A Portfolio of Transportation Assets. The report, commissioned in advance of NADO's rural transportation planning conference here in August, featured case studies of Duluth, MN and Superior, WI. A freelance writer was hired and the MIC assisted in setting up interviews with many transportation contacts both locally and in the Arrowhead region.

## **3. Northern MN/Northwest WI Freight Study – Scope of Work**

Andy McDonald presented the scope of work for the Northern Minnesota/Northwest Wisconsin Freight Study, a comprehensive multimodal look at freight movement throughout the region. He noted that several current and projected freight issues facing the region prompted this project, including mine and refinery expansions, opportunities to develop an intermodal

terminal, wind energy equipment moving both ways through the port, and large pieces of equipment coming through the port onto rail and truck. The final product will provide a better understanding of the demands freight placed by freight on the regional transportation infrastructure and will provide a framework to identify necessary improvements to accommodate regional economic growth. Timeline estimated to be 12-18 months. He added that outreach will be an important part of this study-to gain direct feedback from shippers and freight users. A consultant will be hired to handle this and other aspects of the study, which will be jointly coordinated by MnDOT Central Office, MIC staff and the chosen consultant. He closed by requesting approval of the Scope of Work.

**Motion and** Ed Anderson/David Bilden moved to approve the Scope of Work as presented.

**Discussion** *During the discussion, it was noted that the Scope had been expanded, at Mn/DOT's request, to include most of northern Minnesota (Districts 1 and 2), not just the northeast as originally planned, to get a better look at all freight movements based on new and planned development in and through the entire region. Ron Chicka noted that some aspects of the study, including the consulting budget and the amount of funding to be contributed by WisDOT, are still uncertain, but that we are ready to move forward with the initial steps. Ed Anderson suggested that perhaps UWS resources could be tapped via Dr. Stewart's Transportation and Logistics program; Ron responded that he and Andy planned to meet with him to discuss their possible participation in the study. There was no further discussion and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.*

#### 4. 2009-2012 Duluth Metro Transportation Improvement Program (Final)

James Gittemeier presented the final 2009-2012 Duluth Metropolitan Area TIP for approval. He outlined the few comments that had been received since the draft TIP was issued in May, consisting of a few minor language changes as well as Mn/DOT's addition of a \$41 million bridge replacement project, affecting several structures on I-35 between 40<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenues W.

He noted that funding amounts for 2009 and 2010 are significantly higher than the amounts for 2011 and 2012, due to the inclusion of the Miller Hill reconstruction and the final HPP projects.

He reported that an air quality conformity discussion with the MPCA, FHWA, and Mn/DOT took place on June 23 and a positive determination was made, which verifies that the projects in the TIP will have no adverse impacts on air quality.

He added that a new feature of the TIP this year will be the inclusion of an interactive GIS- and web-based mapping system, to provide additional online information about the scheduled TIP projects.

He closed by requesting approval, noting that once the TIP is approved by the MIC Policy Board, it moves on to Mn/DOT for their review and acceptance into the State TIP (STIP).

**Motion and** Earl Elde/Mike Coyle moved to approve the final 2009-2012 Duluth Metropolitan

**Discussion** Area Transportation Improvement Program as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

## 5. UMD-CSS Transportation Assessment

Andy McDonald reported that data collection continues as the MIC intern has been working this summer to update the sidewalk condition and curb ramp inventories around both campuses.

He added that Robert Herling had also completed a crash analysis on a number of intersections and road segments suggested by members of our study committee. Four intersections have been identified as having higher than average crash or severity rates and will receive further analysis. One of these, the intersection at College Street and Junction Avenue, was called out for both crash and severity rates. They will be examining these areas further to identify specific issues and proposed solutions.

He also reported that the online survey of faculty, staff and students at both colleges received over 1400 responses. He added that some significant differences are shaping up between the student population and the faculty/staff; for example, the majority of transit commuters are students, who live within 1 to 5 miles of campus. All data is now being analyzed and will help to formulate the study's final recommendations.

He added that an important goal of the Assessment is to present recommendations targeted at making modal choices more accessible (such as new bike lanes, sidewalk repair and snow removal enforcement along key pedestrian routes). He reported that the study committee will be reconvened this fall to identify problems and to devise the recommendations. More public meetings are also planned, similar to those held during the course of the Duluth Heights study.

He noted that there will also be some potential impacts if and when UMD decides to move forward with the idea of a main entrance to campus. It's likely that one recommendation will be to model the traffic impacts of such an entrance if and when that is proposed.

## 6. Proctor Comprehensive Plan – Safe Routes to School Component

Holly Butcher presented information about the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) activities that she has conducted as one component of the Proctor Comprehensive Plan update. She noted that this is an unusually large school district, geographically, covering over 150 square miles and extending out to Cotton. As with the other SRTS process that have been conducted for the Superior and Duluth school districts, analysis will be limited to "walkable" schools, in this case Bay View Elementary and Proctor Middle School. She reported that in May, MIC staff observed morning and afternoon transportation patterns around both schools and sent out surveys to students and parents, with a good rate of return.

Preliminary issues identified for the grade school included visibility and access issues, congestion and chaotic movements at parent drop off areas; disregard of 'No Parking' signs; and sidewalks that are too narrow, in poor condition, or missing altogether along key pedestrian routes.

For the middle school, she pointed out that there was no sidewalk infrastructure from the new adjacent residential development in the area; additionally there are few marked school crossings. They are especially concerned about the unmarked crossing at Ugstad Road and

malfunctioning walk lights in the downtown area at lighted intersections.

She closed by noting that there will be one more round of SRTS funding coming up this fall. Her goal is to conclude the planning process in time so the plan recommendations can be utilized to prepare SRTS funding applications for the Proctor school district.

## **7. Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update**

Robert Herling commented that he will likely be presenting Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) information to the TAC and MIC just about every month for the next year, as staff is relying on these two core groups to serve, in effect, as the advisory body for this plan update.

He noted that the last update was conducted in 2004-05; this time around some new focus areas in the SAFETEA-LU bill need to be addressed. In particular, there will be an emphasis on regional transportation facilities and system preservation. A financial plan is needed to show how the LRTP will be implemented, with a particular emphasis on fiscal constraint—the main challenge being aging infrastructure (poor pavement quality projections) combined with significant construction cost increases and decreasing revenues from all sources (federal, state, license tab fees, gas taxes) based on a new decreasing trend in VMT (the number vehicle miles traveled is leveling out). Similarly, MnDOT is realigning its vision with a focus on preservation effective operations and safety improvements rather than new construction.

All this means that greater scrutiny will be needed for all projects to be included in the LRTP update. The MIC will be meeting with jurisdictions to facilitate this discussion on a project-by-project basis and is currently investigating appropriate ways for critiquing how projects are to be determined as “fiscally constrained” versus “illustrative.” We will also need to emphasize a strategy to ensure that TIP projects are specifically related to the LRTP.

Jim Foldesi asked when jurisdictions would be consulted, and added they have already been trimming and presenting revised project lists to the County Board all along (since the last round of long range project lists were devised). Denny Johnson reiterated that funding will be extremely limited for the greater Duluth and Arrowhead region in the future.

Robert noted that the first staff priority is to gather the data needed to update the traffic model inputs, and that each jurisdiction will need to be consulted about this data--then (later) about the project lists.

## **8. HTAC/Harbor Planning Update**

Andy McDonald reported that the HTAC meeting was held on Wednesday, June 4th at the Superior Public Library. He noted that they welcomed a couple of new members: Nancy Larson from the Wisconsin DNR and Dan Weber from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Commander Gary Croot, head of the US Coast Guard Duluth Marine Safety Unit, was also recognized as this was his last HTAC meeting before moving on to his new assignment in Washington DC.

Dave Bowman, project manager from the Detroit office of the Army Corps of Engineers, presented information about the newly-approved update to the Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) for the Duluth-Superior harbor. The update to the DMMP is prompted, in large

part, by the fact that Erie Pier's current capacity is just about at the end of its useful service life as a confined disposal facility. A DMMP specifies the approved dredging projects that the Army Corps can spend money on, and that is another reason the current (1998) DMMP is out of date--because a number of new projects that would be useful for this area are not included in the current version. Some possible projects that are now being discussed for inclusion include wetlands restoration at the 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue West site; mineland reclamation; capacity expansions at the Sky Harbor airport and at the CN/Lakehead Ore dock site and the conversion of Erie Pier to a revised capacity as a processing and reuse facility.

Jason Serck, Planning and Port Director for the City of Superior, gave a presentation about the Duluth-Superior Harbor Corrosion Study. Several research projects have been completed, now the data needs to be peer-reviewed before the findings can be released. New coatings are also being tested to see how well they can hold up in our conditions of cold and ice.

Julene Boe, Executive Director of the St. Louis River Citizens Action Committee (SLRCAC), gave a presentation about the delisting process for the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC), one of 43 severely degraded geographic areas designated within the Great Lakes. The SLRCAC, along with the WI DNR and the MPCA, have developed targets/benchmarks for removing the nine identified impaired uses (the loss and degradation of habitat, pollution from sources such as contaminated sediments, sewage wastes, and surface runoff). These draft targets will undergo further stakeholder and public review in July and August. The final list of targets will be submitted to the EPA by the end of 2008 and will serve as the roadmap for actions that will eventually lead to delisting the St. Louis River as an Area of Concern on the Great Lakes.

## 9. Project Updates

### **East Second Street Study, Robert Herling**

Robert Herling reported that MIC staff has conducted turning movement counts and collected ADT and speed data for a number of locations along the East 2nd Street corridor in Superior. This data is being used to more specifically identify certain traffic patterns and better inform our understanding of potential issues which may exist along the corridor. A steering committee is being formed to help direct this study forward, and all of the information gathered to date will be presented to the committee members at an initial meeting in July.

### **2009-2010 MIC Work Plan and Budget, Ron Chicka**

Ron Chicka announced that he will be emailing out a simple survey in preparation for the 2009 – 2010 Work Program to determine TAC and MIC preferences for a few additional discretionary projects that could be included in the second year (2010). He noted that there may be more of an emphasis on policy-level plans in the next couple of years.

## 10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Peterson adjourned the meeting at 8:27 pm.